

Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee
November 13, 2008 – Minutes Taken by Adam Mitchell

Members Attending: Kevin Douglas, F.W. Russell & Sons; Rob Gogan, Harvard; Ryan Gray, MIT; Adam Mitchell, Save That Stuff; Judy Nathans, Cambridge resident; Andrea Yonge, FCR-Boston/Casella

Guests Attending: Mark Evans, FCR-Boston/Casella; Ted Live, Cambridge resident; Randi Mail, Cambridge Recycling Director; Doane Perry, Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association

Market Report

Mark reported that the Yellow Sheet (monthly paper prices published by [Official Board Markets](#)) was not aligned with what paper mills were offering and that mills were not honoring contracts. FCR is now leasing 50,000 square feet of storage space to store recyclables on a temporary basis until "movement returns to the market".

On 12/8/08, the NY Times wrote "...*This is a cyclical industry that has seen price swings before. The scrap market in general is closely tied to economic conditions because demand for some recyclables tracks closely with markets for new products.... One reason prices slid so rapidly this time is that demand from China, the biggest export market for recyclables from the United States, quickly dried up as the global economy slowed.*"

Randi asked about options to stimulate market demand for recycled paper and increase minimum requirements for post-consumer recycled content. Mark said that the cost of virgin fiber keeps increasing, so there is potential for recycled products becoming more cost competitive.

The group discussed whether there is a way to stimulate domestic consumption of recycled content products. All agreed that it is a global economic issue and to change the level of existing domestic mill capacity would require significant financial investments. Approximately 3 million tons of domestic capacity has been taken off line in the last decade as the economy has become increasingly dependent on foreign production plants.

Kevin said that in 1995, when the value of recyclables also when down significantly, 70 communities had contracts with floor prices that forced Prins Recycling into bankruptcy. Mark said that Casella has implemented hedging mechanisms to protect some of their tonnage from drastic price fluctuations. This should help them avoid the pitfalls that Prins experienced. Mark also said that commodity values for plastic and steel have plummeted.

NRC Conference

This year's National Recycling Council's conference was held in Pittsburgh. The theme was "Innovation and our Sustainable Future". William McDonough was the keynote. Here are some highlights from the workshops Randi attended:

- [Value of Recycling in a Carbon Constrained World](#). Speakers reviewed the federal EPA's "WARM Model" that calculates the environmental benefits of recycling and composting. There was a presentation of the [NRC's white paper on Recycling and Climate Change](#)

and the [Chicago Climate Exchange](#).

- [Innovations in Education](#). Presentations on other communities outreach efforts. [Minnesota](#) and [Portland, Oregon](#).
- Randi felt that the [Curbside Value Partnership](#) offers good resources. It is industry-funded and awards grants to communities. Services include: sharing metrics for measuring success, website evaluations, TV & radio PSA's, webinars, and tips for effective education programs.
- [Sustainable Cities and Zero Waste](#). [Austin](#) Texas hired Gary Liss to help prepare a zero waste plan. [Fresno CA](#) has an aggressive zero waste plan: In general all the zero waste goals are similar, looking to "get to zero" by 2040, incorporating a goal of 90% reduction and diversion.
- Two websites to checkout include: www.PaperRecycles.org & www.KeepOceansClean.org

Rob Gogan's take-away from the conference was the discussion on "manufacturer's responsibility". He liked Bill McDonough's positive environmental pitch to "like a tree"! "A cherry tree produces 1,000 blossoms for each piece of fruit". [Click here](#) for more info on Mr. McDonough. He also mentioned discussions about compostable products and whether there is a solution to the "[great pacific garbage patch](#)" of plastic waste" North Pacific Ocean.

Random Tidbits

- Randi reported that there were over 60 applicants for the vacant Recycling Program Manager position.
- Doane asked Randi what people at the NRC conference asked her about what's going on in Cambridge: [commercial](#) and [drop-off](#) organic programs
- Randi said the Commissioner is in receipt of the Committee's letter regarding how to expand cardboard collection at the curb. Once the MA DEP's report for Cambridge is made public, the Commissioner would like to meet with the Committee to discuss this and other topics covered in the report (PAYT, single stream recycling, curbside organics and increased enforcement.)